

*Post-liberation Politics: African Perspectives*  
*Examining the political legacy of struggle*

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This article examines the politics of African states in which insurgencies or liberation movements have taken control of the government. It examines the impact on governance of reforms introduced by these post-liberation regimes, their relations with traditional authorities and civil society and relationships within and between competing guerrilla movements. It also examines the nature of the state that emerges from this process. The ‘post-liberation’ state label is argued to be both meaningful and useful, as part of a larger project of exploring and explaining the post-colonial African state, highlighting debates about representation, citizenship and nation-building. While post-liberation regimes have advantages in implementing state building projects, they are also subject to contestation when the new state institutions and regime incumbents become too exclusivist or predatory. (124 words)

*Post-liberation Politics: African Perspectives*  
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Post-colonial Africa has experienced many conflicts. But few intra or inter-state conflicts have resulted in the creation of new states or the amalgamation of states.<sup>2</sup> Conflict has mainly been about control of the state, rather than new geographic dispensations. Theorists of the African politics are in agreement about why this happened: the colonial state, whether gatekeeper<sup>3</sup> or rock-crusher<sup>4</sup> became the locus of power, and transferred this role to the post-colonial state, buttressed by international norms of sovereignty.<sup>5</sup> Those blocked from power because of ethnic arithmetic, first-past-the-post politics or the imposition of autocratic rule had few reasons to form loyal oppositions, or abide by the rules of the game.

Attempts to advance competing claims about the shape and governance of post-colonial nations and states through political means failed because of the zero-sum nature of politics and movements turned instead to armed conflict. In those cases where insurgencies or armed liberation movements took control of states, one competing claim became dominant, and shaped post-liberation politics. Although struggles against European colonisers and settler states – Zimbabwe, Mozambique, South Africa – are the best known examples of such political and military competition, in recent years, a number of insurgencies against ‘African’ colonisers – Eritrea, Namibia and Western Sahara – and against post-colonial governments – Ethiopia, Rwanda, Somalia and Uganda – also emerged as successful revolutionaries. In contrast, Polisario in the Western Sahara and the Somali National Movement (SNM) in Somaliland, have failed to win control of internationally recognised states,

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<sup>1</sup> This paper developed as a result of a panel at the AEGIS European Conference on African Studies in 2005. Many thanks are due to the participants in that panel, for their stimulating papers. In particular, I would like to thank Filip Reyntjens and Sarah Vaughan for careful reading of my paper. Crawford Young, Zachariah Mampilly and Dam Hammett also gave me useful feedback and constructive suggestions. Thanks are also due to Gavin Williams, who encouraged me to think about these issues in the first place.

<sup>2</sup> P. Engelbert and R. Hummel, ‘Let’s stick together: understanding Africa’s secessionist deficit’ *African Affairs* 104 (416) 2005 pp. 399-427.

<sup>3</sup> F. Cooper. *Africa since 1940: The Past of the Present*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002.

<sup>4</sup> C. Young *The African Colonial State in Comparative Perspective* New Haven, Yale University Press, 1997.

<sup>5</sup> C. Clapham, *Africa and the international system: The politics of state survival* Cambridge: CUP, 1996; Engelbert and Hummel ‘Let’s stick together’ propose some critiques of this position, but their argument does not affect the cases we consider below – in which groups succeed in taking control of the central state and in which they make claims to represent the entire nation.

and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM), now governs in the Southern Sudan but shares power with the Khartoum-based government. Other uprisings, for example in the Casamance, the Caprivi Strip, and Mali, have fallen short of these goals while 'warlord' style insurgencies follow a different governmental logic. This article examines what happened after successful 'liberation insurgencies' and 'reform insurgencies' seized control in sub-Saharan Africa.<sup>6</sup>

Armed insurgencies, or guerrilla movements, differ from military coups and war-lord insurgencies in ways that become increasingly important once they take control of the state. As Leys and Saul remark, there is a distinct possibility that "the very process of struggling for liberation, especially by resort to force of arms, may generate political practices that prefigure undemocratic outcomes in the wake of revolutionary success".<sup>7</sup> Many liberation movements have a clear and well-articulated ideology that has been honed in the bush to attract recruits and civilian supporters, as well as for presentation to the media and academics. Particular forms, norms and practices of rule are developed in 'liberated zones', where these exist. Prolonged warfare leads to the development of hierarchies, hardship and brutality have been experienced, and links with external supporters and arms dealers have been strengthened. These factors continue to impact on the style of governance, institutional forms, and relations with civilian populations 'post-liberation'. But other factors also matter – the nature of the transition, the character of the state against which the revolution has occurred, the reaction of the former incumbents and the international array of forces. While practical and academic attention has been paid to the issues of demobilisation and reconciliation, less systematic attention has been paid to the forms of politics emerging in these states.<sup>8</sup> Although many (but not all) of these states adopted liberal constitutions, the tensions between liberal norms of state-society relations and the legacies of warfare have come to the fore. Roger Southall captures this dilemma in referring to competing paradigms of 'liberation or democracy'<sup>9</sup>, but this bi-polar snapshot risks obscuring salient detail. As Brian

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<sup>6</sup> C. Clapham *African Guerrillas* Oxford, James Currey, 1998, pp 6-7. Clapham distinguishes between liberationist and separatist or secessionist insurgencies, considering Eritrea, Somaliland and Western Sahara as examples of the latter, but they would see themselves as liberationist.

<sup>7</sup> C. Leys and J. Saul, 'Liberation without democracy? The SWAPO crisis of 1976' *JSAS* 20(1) 1994, p. 146.

<sup>8</sup> H. Melber ed. *Re-Examining Liberation in Namibia: Political Cultures Since Independence* Uppsala, NAI, 2003; H. Melber ed. *Limits to Liberation in Southern Africa* South Africa: HSRC, 2003.

<sup>9</sup> R. Southall 'Between competing paradigms: Post-colonial Legitimacy in Lesotho' in Melber ed. *Limits to Liberation*.

Raftopoulos has reminded Zimbabweans, the liberation struggle was also always about rights and democracy.<sup>10</sup> Different experiences, institutions and structures strengthen particular political programmes at particular junctures. Individuals move between these competing paradigms, neither of which captures the entirety of their experience.

This article attempts to unpack some of the ideological baggage that surrounds governments of former guerrillas, to interrogate their relations with civilians, both former allies and former enemies, and to make sense of the politics in these countries. We argue that to see transitions in countries such as South Africa, Namibia, Uganda, Rwanda, Ethiopia and Eritrea simply as examples of the ‘third wave of democracy’ obscures rather than clarifies. These countries’ experiences are distinct from those that experienced either military coups or civilian transfers of power, and this distinctiveness needs to be considered in making sense of their attempts to build post-transition states and nations.<sup>11</sup> This article examines the impact of the struggle on post-liberation government reforms and relations with traditional authorities, and civil society. It proposes that the relationships within and between guerrilla movements are a significant legacy, which impacts on the mode of governance. Finally, it examines the nature of the state in post-liberation societies. While post-liberation states carry within them advantages in state formation, they are also subject to contestation when the state building project becomes too exclusivist or predatory. These states are far from the ‘failed state’ stereotype of African politics, which increasingly informs model building and generalisation.<sup>12</sup> They are, for the most part, bureaucratically strong states with controlled borders and economies. We propose that identifying them as ‘post-liberation’ states is both meaningful and useful, as part of a larger project of exploring and explaining the post-colonial African state. In

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<sup>10</sup> B. Raftopolous, ‘The State in Crisis: Authoritarian Nationalism, Selective Citizenship and Distortions of Democracy in Zimbabwe’ in A. Hammar, B. Raftopoulos and Stig Jensen, eds. *Zimbabwe’s Unfinished Business Harare*, Weaver, 2003 pp. 217-241.

<sup>11</sup> We are not studying nation and state-building as ‘externally driven or facilitated’ processes but rather on the relations between incoming regimes and their citizens.

<sup>12</sup> See for instance, U. Engel and G. R. Olsen ‘Global Politics and Africa – Africa in international Relations Theory’ in U. Engel and G. Rye Olsen(eds) *Africa and the North* London, Routledge, 2005; pp 1-19; K.C. Dunn ‘Introduction Africa and International Relations Theory’ in K.C. Dunn and T.M. Shaw (eds) *Africa’s Challenge to International Relations Theory* New York, Palgrave 2001, pp 46-63; P. Chabal and J.-P. Daloz, *Africa Works* Oxford, James Currey, 1999.. It is perhaps significant that Chabal and Daloz specifically exclude South Africa and much of the Horn from consideration in their hypothesis of ‘instrumentalisation of disorder’.

particular, they highlight debates about representation, citizenship and nation-building at the heart of Africa's contemporary political dilemmas.

### At the barrel of the gun?

Given the common metaphors of struggle and resistance, and the dominance of African militaries in post-colonial states, even well-known scholars sometimes forget that few independent African regimes came to power as a direct result of sustained violent conflict involving large armed forces.<sup>13</sup> Nationalist movements were often banned, prevented from organising and leaders were detained but those countries which achieved independence in the late 1950s and 1960s, did so through mainly peaceful means – rallies, protests, and non-violent direct action – and experienced a pattern of 'normal' decolonisation. In contrast, the settler states of Southern Africa resisted decolonisation and stymied nationalist parties had turned to the armed struggle by the 1970s. But none of these countries can be considered to have gained independence as a result of military victory. The combined effect of 'bush war' and international pressure led to multi-racial elections and the negotiated removal of settler rule in Zimbabwe in 1980, Namibia in 1990 and South Africa in 1994. Overlapping chronologically, second-phase liberation movements seized power in Uganda in 1986, Ethiopia and Eritrea in 1991, and Rwanda in 1994. These movements, did, in fact attain military victories, which led to their seizing control of the territorial state.

Although it is difficult to remember now, hopes for Zimbabwe's future were high as Mugabe used his Independence Day speech to call for reconciliation between races and armies. Zimbabwe also became a model for Namibia and South Africa, showing how a 'radical' state could still protect commercial farmers and maintain a privileged economic lifestyle for elites. Namibia and South Africa's liberal, participatory constitutions further increased aspirations that out of bloody conflict and racial divides, new, rainbow nations could be born. And the new leaders of Uganda, Rwanda, Eritrea and Ethiopia were christened the 'new breed' of African presidents. Somehow, it seemed, despite these records of conflict, these countries were expected to follow a similar – or even better – pattern than their peacefully decolonised

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<sup>13</sup> For example, G. Hyden claims that the southern African liberation movements 'did not come to power by way of a popular ballot, but by the way of the barrel of the gun' *African Politics in Comparative Perspective* Cambridge, CUP, 2006 p38.

forebears. However, although some aspects of policies implemented in the early post-liberation were not dissimilar to those observed thirty years earlier in Ghana or Tanzania we can identify observable impacts of the struggle in particular aspects of state-formation.

#### History, culture and state-(re)formation

Upon seizing power, the former liberation movements found themselves in control of the very states against which they had fought, and in a position to put in practice dreams and plans developed during their period of relative obscurity. These insurgencies had “recruited mass followings with detailed visions of the future....[they did not] merely style themselves as ideological allies to get superpower patronage or out of conceptual poverty.”<sup>14</sup> In addition to ideologically-derived ideas about governance, former insurgents could also draw on their experiences in army formations, governing liberated zones, and refugee camps.

New leaders moved quickly to show their mark on the fabric of the capital cities, and the official face of government. Kevin Dunn highlights the importance of performative acts of state-hood: “states that are able to perform these everyday attributes of stateness are considered solid, strong, substantial states”.<sup>15</sup> In post-liberation states, many of the performative acts of stateness identified by Dunn – military parades, press conferences, the production of a new flag and new currency – are redolent of the struggle, or replay on a broader stage, stylised patterns of behaviour learned during the war. So, in Eritrea, the new currency was named after the great military front-line in Nakfa, cultural troupes provided a pageantry of ethnic music and dance, while newly appointed ministers retained their casual dress style. While not all of the civilian population appreciated the resonance of these acts, they do carry meaning for those who fought in the struggle, supported the movement, or lost children in those conflicts. Memory and memorialisation are inscribed in the day to day actions of the new states. These take very different forms. In the years after independence in Zimbabwe, streets that had been named for white settlers were gradually renamed after (dead) liberation war heroes (with the exception of President

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<sup>14</sup> W. Reno, ‘The politics of insurgency in Collapsing states’ *Development and Change* 33 (5) 2002, pp.842-3.

<sup>15</sup> K.C. Dunn ‘MadLib # 32 The (Blank) African State: Rethinking the Sovereign State in International Relations Theory’ K.C. Dunn & T.M. Shaw, eds. *Africa’s Challenge to International Relations Theory*. New York: Palgrave, 2001 p. 58

Mugabe). In Eritrea, streets first named in honour of Italian fascists, then renamed by Haile Selassie and the Dergue, were renamed again after rather more abstract conceptions: *Harnet* (freedom/liberation), *Sameatat* (martyrs). TV, radio, national festivals, music, official histories and school curricula were further adaptations of such practices – designed to reinforce the structures of the new state, and propagate the national identity, reformed in the image of the winners of the struggle.<sup>16</sup>

As Branch & Mampilly observe very little research has been carried out on the governance of liberated areas.<sup>17</sup> Assessing governance in the bush is thus difficult – access to liberated zones tended to be contingent on partisan support for the movement, and even then access may have been firmly controlled. Some research has been conducted after the fact, but even this is often subject to constraints on access, biases, and fear on the part of researchers and informants.<sup>18</sup> As Norma Kriger's early work in Zimbabwe exemplifies, differing methodologies can reveal startlingly different perspectives on the experiences of war among civilian populations.<sup>19</sup> However, institution building in some post-liberation states did clearly reflect 'learning in the bush', while others reflect ideological commitments developed by the movement in exile, and a deep awareness of sacrifices made during the war.

The post-independence 'reform insurgencies' developed distinctive institutional reforms – perhaps because of the level of 'state collapse' that accompanied their insurgencies. Uganda's movement style (no-party) democracy and commitment to decentralisation are perhaps the best known of these. In Uganda, a critique of the colonial and post-colonial system merged with the experience of liberated zones. Multi-party politics was feared because of its tendency to factionalise and destabilise Uganda. Traditional rulers were neither democratic, nor representative:

In a country where urban areas were administered by an electoral civic order and rural areas through appointed chiefs, the impact of a multi-

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<sup>16</sup> See for instance, T. Ranger . 'Historiography, Patriotic History and the History of the Nation' *JSAS*, 30:2 (2004), pp. 215-234; C. Matzke, 'En-gendering theatre in Eritrea' Unpublished PhD thesis, University of Leeds, 2003; M. Palmberg, 'Music in Zimbabwe's Crisis' in *Sounds of Change* ed. S.-M. Thorsen Stockholm, SIDA 2004.

<sup>17</sup> A. Branch and Z. C. Mampilly, 'Winning the war, but losing the peace? The dilemma of SPLM/A civil administration and the tasks ahead' *JMAS* 43(1) (2005), pp. 1-20; but see also N. Kasfir, 'Guerrillas and civilian participation: the National Resistance Army in Uganda, 1981-86' *JMAS* 43 (2) 2005, pp. 271-296.

<sup>18</sup> S. R. Dorman, 'Narratives of nationalism in Eritrea: research and revisionism' *Nations and Nationalism*. 11(2) 2005, pp 203-222.

<sup>19</sup> N. Kriger, *Zimbabwe's Guerrilla War: Peasant Voices* Cambridge, CUP, 1992.

party democracy turned out to be superficial and explosive... Simultaneously, would not the same election - in which the winning party came to represent citizens in urban society and to be master of the peasant subjects it ruled through chiefs it had appointed – be equally explosive? <sup>20</sup>

In Uganda, resistance councils, first established in liberated parts of the south-west of Uganda, were transformed into civilian, governmental bodies, and expanded across the rest of the countryside, linked to decentralisation reforms. But although resistance councils were “a political masterstroke for the NRA, an organization enthusiastically received by villagers who had never governed themselves before”<sup>21</sup> their post-1986 transformation has been less successful. Mass popular participation in resistance councils is an essential aspect of Uganda’s ‘no-party’ movement democracy. But, as Kasfir argues, movement democracy did not become institutionalised in Uganda. In the late 1990s, he wrote: “paradoxically, it is less so now than it was at the start, when it was introduced across the country.”<sup>22</sup> Instead, movement democracy has been used to strengthen President Museveni’s hold on power.

The Somali National Movement (SNM), essentially a clan-based resistance movement founded in 1981 to contest Siad Barre’s government in northern Somalia, took a very different attitude towards traditional authorities. Prunier tells us that the SNM “functioned not as a guerrilla ‘front’ distinct from the population but rather as an armed expression of the Isaaq people”.<sup>23</sup> Most accounts emphasise the democratic nature of government within the movement, with rotating leadership and participatory decision-making. Upon seizing power and declaring independence from the south in 1991, the government was constituted to balance clan representation and relied on elders for successful negotiations, peace-building, and reconciliation.<sup>24</sup> This involvement of clan elders and their strong control over the SNM was not because of “northern virtue” but because of their role in guaranteeing the credit system, which

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<sup>20</sup> M. Mamdani ‘Why Museveni does democracy his way’ *Mail & Guardian* (South Africa) 23 June 1997.

<sup>21</sup> N. Kasfir ‘Guerrillas and Governance: The Ugandan National Resistance Army, Civilians and Committee Organization --a first cut’ LiCEP 3 Harvard-MIT meeting 23-25 March 2001.

<sup>22</sup> N. Kasfir, ‘Démocratie de ‘mouvement’, L’légitimité et pouvoir en Ouganda’ *Politique Africaine* 75 (October) 1999, p. 21.

<sup>23</sup> G. Prunier, ‘Somaliland: Birth of a New Country?’ in Charles Gurdon ed. *The Horn of Africa* London, UCL Press, 1994, 62

<sup>24</sup> M. Bradbury, A.Y. Abokor and H.A. Yusuf, ‘Somaliland: Choosing Politics over violence’ *ROAPE* 30 (97) 2003, p.459.



underpinned both the remittances and SNM's funding base in the diaspora.<sup>25</sup> Somewhat ironically Reno credits Mengistu's interference with the movement in Ethiopia, which prevented them becoming dependent on donors, with pre-empting the emergence of either 'political entrepreneurs' or 'predation': "SNM fighters could not loot local communities that provided critical income from remittances and which were the bases of the commercial organisations essential to the militia's continued survival".<sup>26</sup> To date, the involvement of clan elders in government, and, the government's reliance on 'civil society' for resources and infrastructural development, seem to have avoided the dangers of the 'gate-keeper' state in Somaliland, despite its continuing lack of international recognition.

Like Uganda and Somaliland, the southern African post-liberation state reforms have also tackled the thorny issue of traditional authorities. Permeated by a modernising Marxist ethos, these movements saw traditional authorities as obstacles to liberation at best, and 'sellouts' at worst. Hence, the Mozambican and Zimbabwean states attempted to downplay and marginalise the institution of chieftaincy in the early years of independence. However, as the new governments struggled with issues of governance, they turned back to traditional leaders, increasingly relying upon them politically, as well as administratively.<sup>27</sup> The realisation of the utility of chiefs seems to have come sooner in South Africa and Namibia. In Namibia, Becker suggests, "the discourses of the liberation movement, SWAPO [South-western Africa People's Organisation], mediated global visions of modernity in the nationalist struggles against 'sell-out' chiefs and contrived custom and tradition. SWAPO, now the ruling party, has ostensibly reconciled with the previously derided chiefs and, in recent legislation, has recognised the continuation of the institution of chieftaincy".<sup>28</sup>

If attitudes towards traditional authorities differ radically between our cases, most show themselves to be suspicious of sharing authority with religious leaders, reflecting both the legacy of the struggle and post-liberation instrumentality.

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<sup>25</sup> W. Reno, 'Somalia And Survival In The Shadow Of The Global Economy' QEH Working Paper 100 2003, p. 24.

<sup>26</sup> Reno, 'Somalia And Survival' p5

<sup>27</sup> J. Alexander, 'Chiefs and the State in Independent Zimbabwe' paper presented to Conference on Chieftaincy in Africa, St Antony's College, Oxford, 9 June 2001; L. Buur and H.M. Kyed *State recognition of traditional authority in Mozambique* Uppsala, NAI, 2005.

<sup>28</sup> H. Becker 'New Things after Independence': Gender and Traditional Authorities in Postcolonial Namibia' *JSAS* 32(1) 2006 29-48.

Mozambique famously attempted to ban churches. The Eritrean government's crackdown on Pentecostal churches may reflect similar Maoist secularism, or just an attempt to retain over control over "destabilising influences"<sup>29</sup>. In South Africa and Zimbabwe, the anti-apartheid churches withdrew from public life at independence, focussing on development activities, but recent attempts to re-engage in public debates have met with intolerance, and accusations of interference. In Namibia churches had been significant allies for SWAPO, and continued in a privileged relationship, more critically described as an 'unhealthy symbiosis,' until they dared raise the issue of detainees who had died or disappeared while in SWAPO prisons.<sup>30</sup>

Ethiopia and Eritrea's territorial reforms reflect their contrasting ideologies of nation-hood. In Eritrea, Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF) fighters assumed administrative and governmental roles and the EPLF central committee became the legislative branch of government.<sup>31</sup> Distinctive nation-building, rejecting both sectarianism and ethnic divides, was reflected more in the introduction of new language policies and local government reforms. New administrative regions designed to bridge ethnic, religious, and linguistic groups were created to replace old 'ethnically based' divides. But local cultures are also promoted through the use of 'maternal languages' in primary education, but this has not been popular with some Muslim communities, whose children are taught in 'minority' languages, rather than Arabic. In contrast, Ethiopian state reforms took exactly the opposite path, creating ethnically based states, and reifying ethnicity as an organising tool. The ethnically-formulated constituent fronts of the liberation movement were well positioned after 1991 to assume control of the four core states. Rwanda has attempted to ban talk of ethnicity, but the emergence of new dividing lines that replicate older divides marking out some as genocide survivors and others – returned from exile – as Anglophones, reveal the difficulty of legislating reform.

### Dominating Governance

In Zimbabwe, Namibia and South Africa, less radical reforms followed the seizure of power, which was mediated through internationally observed multi-party elections.

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<sup>29</sup> 'Eritrea targeting 'permitted' churches *BBC* 20 April 2006.

<sup>30</sup> J. Saul and C. Leys, 'Lubango and After: 'Forgotten History' as Politics in Contemporary Namibia' *JSAS* 29(2) 2003, 339 citing Christo Lombard, 'The role of religion in the reconstruction of Namibian society' in *Journal of Religion and theology in Namibia* (1999).

<sup>31</sup> D. Pool, *From Guerrillas to Government Oxford*, James Currey, 2001.

Zimbabwe, both before and after independence, flirted with single party rule, but failed to implement it. Gretchen Bauer suggests that in Namibia this decision was the result of Namibia receiving “its independence at a different world historical moment from other African countries....at a time when single party and military rule had been largely discredited, both inside and outside Africa.”<sup>32</sup> But this makes it all the more striking that Rwanda, Uganda, and Eritrea were not, at first, pressured along similar lines. Instead, their variations on ‘movement democracy’ were tolerated, even welcomed. Uganda and Rwanda have rather grudgingly permitted multi-party elections to resume. Reyntjens, highly critical of the RPF’s handling of multi-partyism, talks of both RPF-isation of the state and tutsi-isation, reflecting the ethnic particularism embedded within the new state, despite its avowedly anti-ethnic dispensation. Eritrea has continued to resist pressure to hold elections, and donor funds have been withheld, in reaction to the arrest of political dissidents, students and journalists. In contrast, Ethiopia moved forward with multi-party elections, but has recently struggled to deal with the reality of powerful and popular opposition groups.

Even countries with entrenched multi-party systems, and plural civil societies, have moved towards ‘dominant-party’ systems in the first decades after liberation, partly as a result of their ‘inclusionary’ tactics, bringing both allies and old enemies into the new governing coalition. Zimbabwe’s Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU) had significant control in Mashonaland, where it had been active during the liberation war, but not in Matabeleland, where its rival Zimbabwe African People’s Union (ZAPU) had long-standing support. It eventually absorbed ZAPU after the detention of political leaders and the violent suppression of civilian supporters. But it also absorbed other parties and allies in less confrontational ways, leaving little rhetorical space for opposition parties to emerge in.<sup>33</sup> In Namibia and South Africa dominant parties emerged through relatively free and fair electoral competition. As Gumede says “the ANC [African National Congress] can hardly be blamed for its dominance when the feeble opposition parties have nothing compellingly different to offer voters”.<sup>34</sup> But as party dominance has increased, voter turnout has decreased. And, the search to dominate the centre ground leads to the exclusion of those not

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<sup>32</sup> G. Bauer, ‘Namibia in the first decade of Independence: how democratic?’ JSAS 27(1) 2001, p. 53.

<sup>33</sup> T. Nkiwane, ‘Opposition Politics in Zimbabwe: the Struggle within the Struggle’ in A.Olukoshi, *The Politics of Opposition in Africa* Uppsala, NAI, 1998 pp. 91-112.

<sup>34</sup> W. M. Gumede, *Thabo Mbeki and the battle for the soul of the ANC* South Africa, Zebra Press, 2005, p. 234

wishing to work from within the governing coalition. In this fascinating study, Gumede identifies Mbeki as drawing on the ANC's 'pluralist' heritage, in attempting to woo both black and white opposition into a new 'consensus' politics.<sup>35</sup> But intolerance of those who reject these conciliatory gestures reflects not so much *pluralist* tendencies as the continuation of coalition-building strategies typified by earlier nationalists. The dominant party systems (and the no-party system in Eritrea), are also notable for increasing centralisation and presidentialism.

Once these dominant parties begin to be challenged, by opposition and civic groups outside the coalition, the exclusionary language of liberation re-emerges. This has been most noted in Zimbabwe, where claims are repeatedly made that Zimbabwe cannot be governed by a party that is not rooted in the struggle. In Namibia, Gretchen Bauer talks of a revival of "the language of Swapo in exile" in which government officials label opposition parties "'traitors and spies' who wanted to bring back 'a white government like that of the Boers during the liberation struggle'"<sup>36</sup> In South Africa, given Mbeki's attempts to include the National Party, the Black Consciousness Movement, and Zulu nationalists, we might expect this language to be more muted, but in practice those who refuse to join the coalition are seen as working outside and against the national interest, defined, much as in the one-party states, by the governing party.

### Bitter struggles

As this suggests, it may prove that the most lasting impacts of liberation struggles are not in the post-liberation institutions that emerged out of the experience, but in the relationships and alliances formed during those difficult years. Patterns of policy and reform in the post-liberation state may reflect the internal dynamics of movements, and governance in training camps and among refugee populations, for example, a commitment to women's liberation, but the implementation of such policies often remains partial and contested. Internal divisions within liberation movements have impacted heavily on experiences during the struggle, and on politics in post-liberation states. Despite an intense rhetoric of 'unity' liberation movements were for the most part coalitions of disparate forces. The struggle was not simply against outside, colonial forces, but also against perceived enemies within. Much energy was

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<sup>35</sup> Gumede, Thabo Mbeki p. 242

<sup>36</sup> Bauer, 'Namibia in the first decade of Independence' p. 44.

expended during struggles to ensure conformity and control, more successfully in some cases than in others. As Henning Melber argues,

[t]he forms of resistance against totalitarian regimes were themselves organised on strictly hierarchical and authoritarian lines, otherwise they would hardly have had any prospect of success...the new societies carried within them the essential elements of the old system against which they had fought.<sup>37</sup>

Such authoritarian tendencies were particularly visible in the enactment of internal discipline, violence directed against 'sell-outs', and in the treatment of female cadres.<sup>38</sup> Those who overwhelmed opponents and forced them out of the field before victory had fewer compromises to make at the point of independence or liberation, as did those who managed to occupy most or all of the territory before seizing power, as in Eritrea. Further constraints were experienced by regimes which took control of states which were divided into 'liberated' and 'un-liberated' zones, a signifier often overlapped with pre-existing ethnic or religious divisions, as in Uganda and Ethiopia.

In some cases the divisions which catalysed disciplinary action within liberation movements are better understood as generational conflicts overlapping with ideological divides, similar to those between 'conservative' and 'radical' forces within the earlier nationalist movements. In Zimbabwe, ZANU overwhelmed ZAPU only after visiting severe repression on civilian followers and political leaders after independence. In Eritrea, the younger EPLF defeated the older Eritrean Liberation Front (ELF) during wartime, forcing it out of the field of battle and absorbing some of its members. Splinter groups of the ELF continue to agitate against the state from exile. ZANU, the EPLF and SWAPO also experienced bitter internal cleavages and purges, as younger generations demanded accountability and democratic openness within the government of their movements.<sup>39</sup>

The South African situation is more complex. Although the ANC maintained its dominance over the younger Pan-Africanist and Black Consciousness movements, some argue that since 1994, it has moved to absorb portions of their programmes and claimed their ideological territory in a sort of Gramscian passive revolution.<sup>40</sup> The most significant divide in the battle for the control of the ANC has been between the veterans of the 'internal' movements – in particular the UDF – and those who were in

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<sup>37</sup> H. Melber, 'Limits to Liberation' in Melber *Re-Examining Liberation in Namibia* p. 12.

<sup>38</sup> See for instance, Kriger, *Zimbabwe's Guerrilla War*.

<sup>39</sup> Pool, *From Guerrillas to Government*, 76-82; Saul and Leys, 'Lubango and After'; M. Sithole, *Struggles within the struggle* 2nd edition Harare: Rujeko, 1999.

<sup>40</sup> S. Friedman, 'South Africa: Entering the Post-Mandela Era' *Journal of Democracy* 10(4) 1999, p.4.

exile, or in the military wing. Raymond Suttner, whose work examines the multiple experiences of those in exile, sums up the divisions between exiles and internals as follows:

Among those who were together outside, there are bonds forged over many decades and in difficult times, and sometimes a sense of veteranism compared with internal activists...sometimes seen as having only recently come to the movement and lacking the level of discipline provided in the military organised exiled movement....on the side of many internal activists, there is...a sense that those from outside are out of touch...or without a sense of mass struggle.<sup>41</sup>

Potent conflicts emerge from within these formal party structures – surrounding questions of entitlement, rewards, and compensation. As some members of the liberation movement take control of the governmental apparatus, others begin the rather more menial tasks of reconstruction. In Namibia, Zimbabwe and Eritrea, shortly after independence, ex-fighters (disabled ex-fighters in the two latter cases) demonstrated for better remuneration, going so far in each case as to take officials hostage, and threaten them with violence.<sup>42</sup> This challenged authority, and claims of ‘comrade-ship’, yet, as Metsola argues for Namibia, the ex-combatant demonstrations can also be seen as reinforcing the authority of the ruling party, contributing to its image as: “the sole agency that could solve the problem”. In Zimbabwe, we see the rise of “political discourse of struggle credentials to legitimate and de-legitimate access to power and resources” within the post-liberation state. Kriger focuses on the divisions within the movement, and how this discourse is used to create ‘insiders and outsiders’ between those who were imprisoned within and those who fought from bases outside Zimbabwe. Metsola’s and Kriger’s research shows how under a rhetoric of unity, division and competition dominated post-war identities within the movement. The politicians clearly understand both the possibilities and dangers inherent in these debates, attempting to frame and delimit the ways in which they are discussed. In Zimbabwe, Kriger tells us, a motion debating the naming of ‘national heroes’ was removed from the order paper because “because it was not in the national interest and was tantamount to debating the value of the revolution, an issue too sacred to discuss in a public forum”.

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<sup>41</sup> R. Suttner, ‘Culture(s) of the ANC of South Africa: Imprint of Exile experiences’ in Melber *Limits to Liberation*, p. 183.

<sup>42</sup> On Zimbabwe N. Kriger, *Guerrilla veterans in post-war Zimbabwe* Cambridge, CUP, 2002; Pool, *From Guerrillas to Government* p174, on Namibia see Metsola below.

In South Africa, the ANC also found itself having to balance the competing interests and perspectives emanating from former allies, not formally within the party, but in alliance with the party, as in the United Democratic Front (UDF). Bompani suggests that the churches react to the post-liberation dispensation initially by removing themselves from political discourse, but engaging with issues of social and economic discourse, not dissimilarly to the gradual radicalisation of churches in Zimbabwe which similarly began with concerns for economic justice.<sup>43</sup> However, these attempts to find some ‘sustainable middle ground between confrontation and deference’<sup>44</sup> become increasingly untenable as political and economic strains increase. In Zimbabwe, the economic crisis of the late 1990s pushed churches and NGOs into confrontational strategies, at which point state efforts to discredit them increase dramatically. Legacies of the struggle also affect the ANC’s policy-making, and relations with civic groups. Butler, for example, identifies the ANC’s unwillingness to accept orthodox or ‘biomedical’ approaches to the AIDS crisis as resulting in part from ‘liberation movement centralisation’ and in part from ‘intellectual discourses of the liberation movement’ in which ‘a history of apartheid division, exile, and racist science’ which ‘predisposed numerous powerful and rational decision-makers to doubt the benevolence and coherence’ of standard approaches to HIV/AIDS explanation and treatment.<sup>45</sup> In consequence, relations with interest groups like the Treatment Action Campaign, composed of many former ANC and UDF activists, become hostile and fragile.

Electoral dynamics, and the inevitable mortality of comrades, may mean that post-liberation governments come with an inbuilt ‘expiry date’.<sup>46</sup> The leaders of post-liberation states are caught up in their reluctance to hand over power to another generation, especially if this risks the election of parties whose legitimating myths are not framed around the liberation of the state. It is no coincidence that Zimbabwe, Namibia, and Uganda have been caught up in presidential term limit debates. It is the inability of the post-liberation generation to resolve internal divisions, schisms and power-struggles within groups of ‘comrades’ (which they deny exist) that renders them vulnerable. One solution to this, taken in Zimbabwe, is for the liberation

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<sup>43</sup> On South Africa see Bompani this volume; On Zimbabwe S.R. Dorman, ‘Rocking the Boat?: Church-NGOs and Democratization in Zimbabwe?’ *African Affairs*, 101, (2002), pp.75-92.

<sup>44</sup> A. Butler ‘South Africa’s HIV/Aids policy 1994-2004 How can it be explained?’ *African Affairs* 104 (417) 2005, p.602.

<sup>45</sup> Butler ‘South Africa’s HIV/Aids policy’ p.612

<sup>46</sup> Thanks to Sarah Vaughan for this particular terminology.

coalition to ‘reinvent’ itself, enabling the increasingly elderly survivors to hold on to power through the indoctrination of youths in ‘education’ and national service programmes, the formation of new alliances with church leaders, healing rifts within the leadership, and forging alliances with former opponents. It seems to be in this nexus of political vulnerability, especially when faced with the ‘uncertainty’ of elections that leaders’ concern with power (and indeed spoils) overwhelms questions of either liberation or democracy, leading to increasing authoritarian and exclusivist politics.

### Transitions and Continuities

Tensions over liberation, democracy, and power are experienced differently – depending on the nature of the transition but also previous experiences of government and statehood. We see the biggest differences in our cases when we compare countries that emerged from negotiated settlements with those that took control ‘at the barrel of the gun’ *i.e.* through sustained military action. Those who took control militarily had fewer compromises to make, although as we have noted, they can still be constrained in attempting to govern divided societies, with different experiences of the war. However, those who signed agreements were not constrained simply by the legal position and international norms but also by political and economic imperatives – not to destabilise already fragile economies, destroy existing infrastructure nor lose valuable expertise. Hence, in the better developed Zimbabwe, Namibia and South Africa negotiations prevent the exodus of white settlers and foreign capital while in Eritrea, Ethiopia, Rwanda, and Uganda, we see much more dramatic institutional reforms and, in Eritrea and Ethiopia, a stronger governmental control on business and development strategies as well as political institutions.

This division maps onto a further difference in these cases. The southern African anti-colonial states inherited colonial and settler state institutions with little internal legitimacy, but, their negotiated transitions meant that some degree of institutional continuity was negotiated – in personnel, buildings and institutional culture. In addition to retaining Rhodesian-era personnel, the Mugabe regime maintained and strengthened Smith’s oppressive arsenal of laws, as well as reinforcing many developmental and land use policies of the modernising state.

In contrast, the East and Central African cases, amongst the very few in Africa where control of the state came through guerrilla insurgents literally capturing both



rural areas and cities, took control of institutions that had been developed by predecessor, independent states. While these were ‘enemy’ institutions, they were not European-derived, and they had been legitimate independent states prior to the outbreak of civil war. Eritrea (and Western Sahara, should it finally win independence), fall somewhere between these two patterns – with post-colonial institutions that were the result of forcible inclusion within neighbouring Ethiopia, having replaced earlier Italian and British constructions.

The negotiated transition in Zimbabwe left a basically pluralist structure on the ground, embedded in a liberal constitutional framework, with a liberationist ethos uneasily resting on top. Even though Zimbabwe has recently attempted to crack down heavily on civil society, trades unions and others, and has instituted rather more radical land reform, the ingrained tradition and legal framework of pluralism persists in people’s experiences and expectations. Hence, when Zimbabwe’s NGOs articulate the right to speak for ‘the people’ they are not only contesting the party’s claim to be “the only legitimate agency of liberation and therefore the sole arbiter of the national interest, patriotism and authenticity”<sup>47</sup> but also drawing on the political capital gained from important roles as development actors in the 1980s and 1990s.<sup>48</sup> The battle in Zimbabwe over the right of NGOs and others to confront and criticise the state has gone further than in Namibia and South Africa, but there too we have seen pressure on civil society to conform and co-operate. But, the resistance of the Zimbabwean state and government pales next to the Eritrean control over NGOs, where there have been repeated purges and expulsions of local NGOs and donor organizations, despite on-going humanitarian crises. Reyntjens similarly tells us of Rwandan NGOs shut-down, or, as in Zimbabwe, taken over by state-aligned groups. The intensity of political polarisation, and the zero-sum nature of political representation is seen particularly in Eritrea and Rwanda, where we speak of politicians and diplomats ‘going into exile’ or ‘defecting’ in language reminiscent of the Cold War.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> B. Raftopoulos, ‘The Zimbabwean Crisis and the Challenges for the Left’ *JSAS* 32(2) 2006, p. 203-219.

<sup>48</sup> S.R. Dorman, ‘From the Politics of Inclusion to the Politics of Exclusion’. *JSAS*. 29: (4) 2003 pp. 845-863.

<sup>49</sup> F. Reyntjens, Rwanda, Ten Years On: From Genocide To Dictatorship *African Affairs* 103 (411) 2004, pp. 103, 177–210; S.R. Dorman, ‘Born powerful? Post-Liberation Politics in Eritrea and Zimbabwe’, Forthcoming in K. Deonandan, D. Close and G. Prevost, eds., *Revolutionaries To Politicians: Case Studies From Africa And The Americas*

But when we examine the legacies of those who fought for control of post-colonial states we also find that older cultures of politics have maintain a surprising level of meaningfulness in the post-liberation years, although it is not clear to what extent this is wholly ‘cultural’ and to what extent it reflects lingering memories and institutional practices. In Rwanda, disappointment with the RPF is seen in criticism that they are replicating ways of governing practiced by the previous regime. Similarly, research in Ethiopia, while acknowledging the impact of the struggle, places more weight on a “deeper political culture which prefigures and influences political style and historical trajectory”<sup>50</sup> and identifies centralized authoritarianism as being ‘being reinvented in a new form’<sup>51</sup> in explaining recent political developments.

### Liberating states?

The goal of liberation movements was not just to seize power, but also to re-shape the state. As has been described above, the newly liberated states balanced the demands of institutional reform with continuity; the definition of the new nation was a compromise between liberationist ethos – often secular and radical – with the inclusionary demands of government. What seems to make these regimes – and their reformist agendas – distinctive is their focus on state-led agendas. Not only does the post-liberation leadership feel that it has won the right to govern the state through sacrifice and in some cases military victory, but this further imbues their state reform project. The ownership of the state – and of the nation – is thus firmly held by the power-holders of the former liberation movement. Combined with popular enthusiasm for their rule at best, resulting from effective mobilisation (or lack of depredation) of war-time civilian populations, but also gratitude for the removal of abhorrent regimes, and the bringing of peace and stability at the least, this creates a potent apparatus of state-building.

In many ways, these states with their developmentalist ethos and remarkably ‘strong’ state apparatuses resemble the ‘integral state’ concept: “the persistent effort to construct a leviathan invested with the mission of transforming society according to

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<sup>50</sup> S. Vaughan, ‘Remaking Ethiopia: post-liberation politics, ethnic federalism, and revolutionary democracy’ Paper presented at AEGIS Conference London 29 June – 2 July 2005; see also S. Vaughan and K. Tronvoll *The Culture of Power in Contemporary Ethiopian Political Life* Stockholm, SIDA, 2003.

<sup>51</sup> J. Abbink ‘Discomfiture of democracy? The 2005 election crisis in Ethiopia and its aftermath’ *African Affairs* 105 (419) 2006, p. 174

an image of its rulers”.<sup>52</sup> The post-liberation states have – to greater and lesser extents – a substantial advantage over other African states on at least three out of four of Joshua Forrest’s components of state ‘hardness’. At the start of their tenure, post-liberation state leaders have ‘structural autonomy’ by which they are able to ‘remove themselves from the influence of societal actors...and make decisions independently of social forces’. They have the capacity to penetrate society politically and ‘secure clear-cut hegemony’ and they have ‘ideological legitimization...the promulgation of official doctrines to defend and justify’ policies.<sup>53</sup> Few states are unconstrained in their application of these capacities, but the post-liberation states have particular experiences, repertoires and resources on which to draw, which makes them more viable. Their separation from society during the war and in exile, renders them somewhat resistant (and sometimes oblivious) to societal pressures. Of course, promises made during the war need to be met, but it is the state that prioritises and sets the demands for meeting developmental goals. Their ideological legitimization, reinforced by the struggle and embodied in the reconfigured state, further structures their quest for hegemony. In this sense, they are not dissimilar from the ‘diasporic states’ described by Ruth Iyob, in which “extended periods of resistance in exile (or in the *maquis*), result in the construction of new identities revolving around a ‘lost’ or ‘betrayed’ nation” which shapes the new state’s definitions of citizenship and of sovereignty.<sup>54</sup>

We are left with the question of to what extent the regime’s claims to legitimization resonate with the citizenry, and to what extent they internalise the new workings of the state. The post-liberation states under consideration here are neither fully hegemonic nor necessarily well-run. It is not clear that electoral reforms have enhanced participation, nor is there a strong culture of accountability in these states. Despite the states’ developmentalist pretensions, it seems unlikely that modernisation strategies which failed previous African states will be any more successful in these cases. And other unpopular reforms – like those affecting traditional authorities in Zimbabwe and Mozambique – were reversed when political pressure grew too strong in times of economic challenge. Indeed, if we consider Forrest’s other category – the

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<sup>52</sup> C. Young, ‘Zaire: The Shattered Illusion Of The Integral State’ *JMAS* 32(2) 1994, pp.247-248.

<sup>53</sup> J. B. Forrest ‘The Quest for State ‘Hardness’ in Africa’ *Comparative Politics*, Vol. 20 (4) 1988 , p 423.

<sup>54</sup> R. Iyob, ‘The Ethiopian-Eritrean conflict: diasporic vs. hegemonic states in the Horn of Africa, 1991-2000’ *JMAS* 38 (4) 2000 p.661.

ability to extract resources – we can see that economic stability and growth may prove more problematic for the sustainability of post-liberation states. Some like Rwanda and Uganda become donor favourites, with most government resources arriving through bilateral and multi-lateral sources, easily captured by the state, or by state aligned civil society organizations, although the private sectors are much more substantial than under previous governments. While not exactly rentier states, they are nonetheless perhaps excessively reliant on external sources of income. In Eritrea and Ethiopia, party-affiliated businesses play a significant role in the ‘private’ sector. The Congolese involvement of companies with links to the Zimbabwean, Rwandan and Ugandan militaries has also raised questions about tendencies towards spoils politics. Zimbabwe, with a strong agricultural and commercial sector, effectively collected personal income tax, sales tax and business taxes during most of its post-independence period. But, under the pressure of structural adjustment and an economic crisis catalysed by payments to war veterans, ZANU experienced its first major electoral challenge. These political pressures manifested themselves also in the regime’s predatory attacks on the commercial farming sector, and resulted in the loss of much external financial investment and donor support. During this economic crisis, attempts to reinvigorate the ‘liberation discourse’ proved effective in some constituencies, but not in others. This is a potent lesson for our other cases, although Issaias Afewerki’s ability to maintain political control in Eritrea, despite the political and economic crises of 1998-2001, is an interesting contrast. Eritrea, with almost no production for export or inwards investment after 1998, still manages to tax its diaspora, and control the movement of its citizens to a quite remarkable extent, perhaps because the liberation discourse had never been allowed to fall into abeyance. At the same time, it imprisoned senior former members of the liberation army, accused of fomenting discord, who remain in detention, and maintained military conscription despite increasing opposition. Jeffrey Herbst cites Stein Rokkan’s argument that “control of migration is *the* test of whether a state is growing stronger”.<sup>55</sup> In this context the Eritrean state’s control over emigration, internal population movement and military service, even under conditions of economic scarcity, must qualify it as Africa’s strongest post-colonial state.

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<sup>55</sup> J. Herbst, ‘Migration, the Politics of Protest, and State Consolidation in Africa’ *African Affairs*, 89(355) 1990, p. 202.

### The shattered illusion of the post-liberation state?

In a continent where ‘soft’ or even ‘failing’ states are often seen as the norm, the states described above are intriguing exceptions. Their ability to perform many governmental functions relatively efficiently, without descending into spoils politics, is particularly notable. However, this effectiveness and configuration of forces is by no means permanent, nor is it necessarily positive for those living under these ‘top-down’ states. Both political and economic crisis weaken the regime’s hold on the state apparatus, force pragmatic alliances, and reveal internal divisions. In dealing with those crises, we see the emergence of a more exclusivist mode of autocratic rule, continuing to draw on tropes of liberation, development and democracy, but which increasingly appear perverted. Here, the post-liberation states and their leaders may face a challenge of expectations not experienced in Crawford Young’s Zaire, where the “illusion of the integral state lies shattered”.<sup>56</sup> Many Namibians, Zimbabweans, Eritreans, Rwandans, South Africans, Ethiopians, and Ugandans believed in and fought for liberation, development and democracy. The struggles to hold governments to account may be brutal and unforgiving, as we have seen recently in Zimbabwe, Eritrea and Ethiopia, but they continue to hold out the possibility of liberation as an on-going, contested and valued process.

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<sup>56</sup> Young ‘Shattered Illusion’ p.263

